

## CISM SCIENCE & DEBATE

### CISM is Preventative Care

Some participants may leave a defusing or debriefing or training workshop with an increased awareness of emotional discomfort or distress for that focal incident, a prior incident or for an accumulation of prior incidents. Increasing the awareness of emergency service responders to actual, potential, secondary, or latent traumatization as the result of their involvement in a critical incident, or an accumulation of incidents, is actually one of the purposes of the programs workshops and stress interventions.

### CISD Mobilizes Support

The mobilization of social support appears to be a primary "helpful" factor in CISM interventions. One essential feature of a CISD intervention is the mobilization of the occupational "group" as a defined arena for social support. Follow-up analysis of evaluation questionnaires on CISD interventions conducted by the King County CISM Program similarly reflected that the most useful part of the intervention was in "hearing how my colleagues are doing" and "sharing my experience with colleagues."

## KING COUNTY CISM TEAM

### 24-7 Activation for Help

**253-372-1400**

The King County CISM Team is comprised of mental health professionals and emergency services peers who have training and experience in assisting persons affected by critical stress events.

## Other Professional Resources

### *Your Agency's Peer Support Team*

### *Your Agency's Chaplain*

### *Your Agency's Employee Assurances Program*

### King County EMS – CISM Program

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[www.metrokc.gov/health/ems/cism.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/ems/cism.htm)

## LIFE AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT



# CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS RESPONSE

## WHAT NOW?

King County Emergency Medical Services  
Critical Incident Stress Management Program

**HELPING THE HELPER HELP**

## WHAT DEFINES A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

### ***Your Reaction is your reaction.***

What is a critical stress event to one person may not be to another. These are common reactions to uncommon events. Reactions should decrease with time and support.

*“Any incident faced by emergency services personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which has the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later. All that is necessary is that the incident, regardless of type, generates unusually strong feelings in the emergency workers.”*

Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D.

## AFTER THE INCIDENT

Stay focused upon safety to yourself; follow your operational objectives during the incident. Believe your training will carry you through the incident.

Remember to care for your physical health and needs, i.e. food, and refreshments and rest. Rely on your team of co-workers for support.

Don't expect to feel better immediately. Stress reactions should diminish with time. It may take weeks before feelings improve.

## WHAT'S THE BEST POST EVENT INTERVENTION?

### **Defusing / Demobilization**

A Defusing is a short (half to one hour) session conducted shortly after the incident by trained CISM Team or Peer Support Team members. A defusing provides updates and information about the incident to reduce stress reactions. Demobilizations are for large events.

### **One-on-One (1:1)**

In some cases, critical incident stress affects only one person. The KC CISM Team has resources to connect people with someone who understand the stress reactions experienced by emergency services professionals.

### **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing**

A CISD brings people together who were involved in a critical incident to discuss the event, which brings perspective. The CISD is an educational process that does not prevent PTSD.

### **Other Kinds of Critical Stress Care:**

- Counseling – The King Co. CISM Coordinator can link individuals with specialists trained in critical stress.
- EAP – Employee assistance programs have counselors available.
- Chaplains – A good listener.
- Journaling – Write down what occurred and how it affected you.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO FEEL BETTER?

### **TALKING ABOUT IT HELPS**

Talk with family, friends, peer support, clergy or counselors. If it doesn't feel right to talk now – don't. It may take time.

### **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

- ~ Increasing your exercise helps the adrenergic nervous system.
- ~ Eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains and proteins.
- ~ Keep a sleep routine.

### **THINGS TO AVOID**

#### **EXCESS SUGAR CAFFEINE - ALCOHOL**

Don't use alcohol or drugs to blunt negative feelings. Caffeine and alcohol stimulate the body and mind. Both can intensify sleeping problems. Avoid major changes in your routine.

## STRESS FIRST AID

### **Deep Breathing Exercise:**

- Inhale 4 seconds – hold it 4 seconds
- Exhale 4 seconds – hold it 4 seconds
- Repeat it for 3 minutes

Focus on positives. Try to be optimistic.

Call someone who understands stress:  
King County CISM Team:

**253-372-1400**